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NATURE'S PERFECT THREAD SPINNER

Not one of us has ever confessed one iota of admiration for any of the lowly invertebrates, but if one were to look intently at a piece of genuine silk and note its almost incredible degree of perfection, he would, in all his pride and autocracy, have to acknowledge defeat at the hands of the crawling, unsightly worm, which, alone can produce it. As an artisan, the silk worm is in a class by itself, and try as man will, he has yet been unable to imitate that fibrous product of the silkworm and the spider, to a degree that will deceive the connoisseur.

The eggs of the silkworm, called graine, are hatched out by artificial heat at the period when the mulberry leaves are ready for the feeding of the larvae. The moth of the silkworm lays about two hundred eggs. A view of the eggs hatching is especially interesting.

Pieces of paper, punctured with small holes, are placed over the trays where the eggs are hatching, so the worms can creep through to the light and scrape off any fragments of shell which, adhering to the shell might kill them by constriction. The little worms of voracious appetite, feed on the mulberry leaves. As the moulting periods approach, the worms lose their appetite and cease eating. The silkworm moults about four times. When the caterpillars are mature, which takes about a month, and ready to undergo their transformation into the pupa condition, they cease eating and ascend the brushwood branches or echelletes provided for them, and in which they set about spinning their cocoons. They complete their cocoons in from three to four days and in two or three days thereafter, the cocoons are collected and the pupae killed to prevent their further progress.

Such cocoons as are selected for the production of the graine, on the other hand are collected, freed from the external floss, and preserved at a temperature of 66° to 72° Fahrenheit, and in about two weeks, the moths appear. The coupling which immediately takes place is carefully attended to, the males are afterward thrown away. The art of sericulture can be traced back to 264 B.C.

On the same reel with "The Magic of Spring"

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